

# **The Vidiyal Trust**

**Charity Registration No. 1113691**

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## **Visit No.33 (25th January - 9th February 2008)**

Greetings everyone! I think that I will always regard this as one of the best ever visits. After all the difficulties of the past couple of years we can at last see an excellent and clear path in front of us, all of the projects are progressing extremely well, and the future looks very bright indeed. It is ironic that we would not be in such an excellent place if we had not made the moves that were difficult, as the hymn says "God moves in mysterious ways..."

Travelling with me was Prebendary Peter Speck and his wife Lis, Peter was to speak at a Palliative Care Study Day that we (The Vidiyal Trust) had set up with the Regional Cancer Centre in Trivandrum. Also travelling was Canon Philip McFadyen and his daughter Anna; they had come to spend some time with us in India to see the Mavelikara site, as our planned gardens will be developed in memory of Philip's wife Brenda. Also travelling were the HOPE group, long term friends/partners of our Trust.

So, the trip. It had been planned for some time that H.O.P.E. (Helping Other People Everywhere) would make a third trip to support our work, but this time would be in Sri Lanka. Here, Father Terence had almost come to a halt with the wonderful community centre that he is building for his parishioners, who had been severely affected by the Tsunami. We planned for HOPE to lay flooring, decorate, and do the electrical work on the second floor of the Centre. They were also to shelve out the library that had been sponsored by one of the group. It was a massive task as the floor area is about 45 feet across (being circular); the roof is domed and reaches heights of around 40 feet. As there is also going to be a stage area on this level the lighting was to cover the auditorium and stage area, an incredible task to tackle.

I was with the team for the first couple of days after arrival, when they were able to meet Father Terence, gasp at the size of the job they were to do, and some of us spent an interesting morning in a nearby town buying £2,400 of floor tiles, which I later discovered were to need over 1½ miles of grouting!

After those 2 days we went off to India leaving the HOPE group to their work, and on returning 10 days later there was an amazing transformation. The dozens of lights that had been put in to the ceiling had meant that Alan had spent most of the 10 days at the top of scaffolding. He/they had also connected everything to a single control board. Several fans had also been installed. The floor was tiled, decorating completed, the library shelved, an outside garden area completed and a lot of good will generated. Father Terence was overjoyed. It was an amazing amount of work, in hot and humid conditions. The group had also made "friends" with the small nursery school next door to the Centre, and made personal cash donations to them. They had also supported a really poor couple who were married in the church during their work period, making a photo album of the day for them, and giving them a cash sum to help them to start their married life. This is an inadequate description of what they achieved; we hope to put more on to our website soon. Jacob made the trip to Sri Lanka with me to meet the team, as the next job for HOPE will be to tackle similar work in our new homes in Mavelikara next January.

## Mavelikara

I feel overjoyed every time I go there; the whole area is calm, peaceful and really beautiful. Our site is ready now for the education/home buildings to start, Jacob plans to have the wells started (necessary for building) this month. He and Jessie have already given up their Trivandrum home, and so Jacob is commuting between the Boys and Girls Homes and the new area. Rajan and Santosh, plus the Girls Home staff take care of things in his absence. The children are really excited about the move, and this should happen by May. The buildings will not be completed by then, so we have rented buildings on short term leases, very close by, which will be "home" until they can move permanently, hopefully by this time next year. It has to be done this way because the registration system for each year in Indian schools has to take place by the start of a June term for the whole of the next year. It is not possible to move outside of the June – June year, so we have to leave the current schools by Easter. The children will start at the Mavelikara schools in June 2008. At least they can benefit from the location and site facilities from then, and it will be good for them to be able to watch their homes as they are built.

The school that we have already built on the site for slum children (started with funds from Norwich Diocese) goes from strength to strength. 38 children are registered, which is to be increased to 50 by the start of the new school year. These children are really poor, probably poorer than those in city slums. Most of our children come from families with an annual income of less than £40. They were severely malnourished when we started, but now look so much better. They are having a full meal and a snack meal daily, we have them on vitamin complexes, and have gradually increased their protein intakes, and the change in them is remarkable. We were unsure about sponsoring them to begin with, but none have left, in fact we are being inundated with requests for places, so details will be sent (probably before this report) for those of you who have patiently waited for individual child details, and kindly in the meantime sponsored the whole project. Our local trustees have put in so much work (voluntarily) to take the project forward, we are very grateful to them. The local community is very aware of what we are doing, not least the churches, which will play an integral part in our future. As the children are attending our own school, and we see them on a daily basis it is much easier to monitor what is happening.

You may also be interested to hear that we have a semi resident elephant happily eating the palm leaves from our site!!

So, the plans are to concentrate on the new Boys and Girls Centres so that we can facilitate the permanent move for our children. We will need to build kitchen and dining facilities, and will have these ready for the HOPE visit in January 2009. The next phase will be an office building and vocational training unit. After years of living in rented buildings it will be wonderful to have our own purpose built facilities. We are building to a high standard, and ownership of land and the pending buildings is registered in the name of our Trust.

The children in both homes are fine. Some of the older ones have completed education and/or vocational training, but all will remain part of our family. At the New Year gathering this year all but one of the older children who have left our care "came home." Mavelikara will be their new home for many years to come. Individual information on the changing circumstances of some of the older children will be sent to their sponsors. These are the children, of course, who were put on to the streets by a worldwide organisation, as "difficult." In fact, Jacob and I have a lot to thank them for. Without their action we would not have registered our own Trust to care for them. The children will be writing to their sponsors directly after the move.

We are very happy that a lot of correspondence is happening between sponsors and children but **please** only write care of Father Terence in Sri Lanka or Jacob Joseph in India. Please do not put your personal address on letters to your child – they are very proud of their letters and will show them to relatives and friends. Unfortunately it could be very easy for your kindness and concern to be abused if the letter or your home address falls in to the wrong hands.

Jacob has now moved to Mavelikara and there is no postal forwarding service in India. Those of you sponsoring Mavelikara children will already have his new address; those of you sponsoring the Boys and Girls Home children will have the new address sent with your child's photo.

Next August, as a celebration as we consolidate the 2 groups, (the new school children, and our Boys and Girls Home children); we plan a trip to a water park, trustees, visitors and 97 children!

Also with us for the India part of the visit were Philip and Anna. Philip's wife, Brenda, an inspirational lady in every sense of the word, died a short while before our visit, and her family have donated the funds from her funeral for us to provide gardens in her memory on the Mavelikara site. As Brenda and Philip are also well known artists we will also be utilising some of the funds to start art classes in Mavelikara within the next few weeks. One of our trustees is an artist! We are really pleased that Philip and Anna could come to see the site, and I know that they will return to see the completed complex.

### Continuing work in Trivandrum

Even though we are moving our children from the city we will continue our work there with the Regional Cancer Centre. Working with the Palliative Care Team we helped to put on a study day for doctors and nurses from all over the south of India.

Preb. Peter Speck, a long term sponsor, came as the main speaker on Teamwork in Palliative Care. The whole day was superb, very well received, and extremely informative. Delegates regarded Peter's input on teamwork as "invaluable." Our links with the hospital, the main research and treatment centre in the south, are strong and mutually beneficial. Thanks also to my colleagues at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital who provided materials so that I could also offer a short presentation.

We were also able to provide a second new ambulance for the Palliative Care Team, which takes a doctor, nurses and medication to terminally ill cancer patients. These are extremely poor people who could not afford the transport to hospital. Many are being kept alive by tube feeding, and for others the visiting teams relieve serious pain. The two new ambulances that we have provided (one financed by Rotary Clubs, see the website) have made a real difference to the levels of work being offered. Our sponsors pay for fuel costs and the driver's salary, (without this funding the ambulances would not run) and we are also able to help with supplementary foodstuffs. As an offshoot of this work we are also sponsoring some elderly ladies who are mothers of the patients, and generally destitute. So far we sponsor 4 of these ladies, which takes a lot of worry and pressure from the patients. Whilst we were there, actually on the study day, one of "our" ladies lost her son. We were told that he was so relieved to know that his elderly mother would be cared for, and died more peacefully as a result. This scheme will extend to Mavelikara, as we utilize our buildings to start a day care centre for destitute elderly, this should be in operation by the end of the year, and yes, we will have "grannies" to sponsor!

As an offshoot of the study day opportunities have opened for me to be involved in some nurse training in Trivandrum and Mavelikara, this all helps the profile of our Trust, and continues our networking.

We are very grateful to Peter (and his gracious wife Lis) for lecturing (voluntarily), we are well aware of the massive demands on his time, particularly since his latest publication, "Teamwork in Palliative Care" has just hit the shelves!

So, the work in India is centred now on Mavelikara, the building of our own complex, and the continuing care of our children, some of whom have been with us for most of their childhood. The slum school will expand (we will need more sponsors as we do so); vocational training will become a reality "on site" for our own children and local young people, and we will have the facility for the elderly. Most important is that transparency, secure registration, and real links with the local churches and community will ensure a safe project for years to come.

### Sri Lanka

Apart from the wonderful work completed by HOPE, we continue our sponsorship scheme with Father Terence. He has become a really dear friend, and it is a joy to work with him and his

church. We are sponsoring 34 children now, and do this transparently, through the parish network. As these children are not resident with us it is possible to save a small portion of the sponsorship money (about £1 a month) for the children. As we have been operating for over a year now they are beginning to accrue quite a tidy sum! Father Terence showed us all of the bank books, which the children cannot access until they leave the project. Jacob was interested in doing the same thing for our school children in Mavelikara. We had an afternoon tea together in a tropical rainstorm, which knocked out all of the lights! My apologies to sponsors who will receive the photos that I took, your children don't usually look so startled, it was the flash!!

So, a positive and encouraging visit. We also took time out to go to the Ghats, visit a spice field and wildlife reserve, where we did see an elephant, but that was nothing compared to having one in your own back yard, as we do! We had a relaxing trip on the backwaters, and began to explore our new area more thoroughly.

We are thankful to have been so blessed to enable us to move the work on in the way that we have. Thank you all for your prayers, concern and the constancy of your support.

Jacob, Jessie, Rajan, Boys and Girls Home staff, teachers, our Mavelikara trustees, Father Terence, Jo, Paula, Suzy and I send our love, prayers and thanks to you all.

Pat Atkinson  
March 2008

#### Other bits!

If you have not already seen it our website [www.vidiyaltrust.com](http://www.vidiyaltrust.com) is up and running! We are extremely grateful to Mrs Val Root for doing this for us without charge.

Suzy (Doherty) has now moved, her new address is 86 Orchard Close, Norwich, Norfolk, NR7 9NZ. Please do not send post to her old address at Green Court, as the re-direction service will soon stop. Please continue to send Trust mail to 32 Berryfields, Brundall, Norwich, Norfolk, NR13 5QE.

Our new dedicated telephone number is 01603 635777. This is on answer machine most of the time but we will pick up your messages daily and will respond to them as soon as possible.

As always we seek to reduce admin costs (which do NOT come from your donated funds). Could you please let us know if you have an email address so in the future we can let you know when you will be able to view the latest report and photos on our website. We can also let you know about any curry evenings and events etc that we may be holding. We will continue to send individual sponsors a photo of their child by post.